



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

MEMORANDUM

October 21, 2021

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Supplemental Appropriation: MCPS Summer School Learning Grant #22-15

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #22-15 is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in the County. This supplemental appropriation reimburses Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) for summer programs that based on data reached students who—because of existing educational disparities and pandemic-related inequities—are most likely to benefit from additional learning opportunities.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** Supplemental Appropriation #22-15 would authorize use of Summer School Grant funds from the American Rescue Plan to reimburse MCPS for the range of programs and services it offered during the 2021 summer break. Information accompanying this supplemental appropriation request indicates that a total of 53,295 students attended summer programs and that any student who enrolled within the registration timeline was accepted and received transportation, breakfast and lunch at no cost. See data analysis section for demographic and service group composition for summer program enrollment and Fall 2021 school year enrollment.

As of September 30, 2021, MCPS had a total enrollment of 160,564 students¹, operating 209² schools in the 2020-2021 school year. The majority of MCPS students are students of

¹ MCPS Data Dashboard. Learning Accountability and Results. “Enrollment: Individual Measures”. Available at: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/data/LAR-charts/enrollment.html>

² “About MCPS”. Available at: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/about/>

color with the following distribution by race and ethnicity: 21.8% Black/African American; 14.3% Asian; 32.8% Hispanic/Latino; 25.8% White; .1% American Indian/Alaska Native; 5% two or more races; no students reported being Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Students in MCPS also have diverse socioeconomic characteristics and are represented in the following service groups in 2021: 16.4% were enrolled in English as a Second language (ESOL) programs; 38.7% were in Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) programs; and 12.5% received special education instruction. Trends in MCPS student enrollment reveal that the school system has become more diverse and is largely a socioeconomic and racially segregated system³.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, students of color experienced disparities in resources, opportunities, and outcomes across educational settings (K-12 and post-secondary)⁴. These disparities are explored in a 2019 Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight report, *MCPS Performance and Opportunity Gaps*⁵. The report notes persistent disparities across a number of achievement performance metrics by race, ethnicity, and service group status. The analysis also explains the inequities underlying many of these disparities, describing how “concentrated poverty and segregation among MCPS schools and the under-funding of compensatory education and ESOL programs relative to student need”⁶ shapes student opportunity.

A growing body of evidence suggests that racial, ethnic, and service group disparities have been exaggerated by the pandemic. The US Department of Education explained in a June 2021 report how the pandemic has impacted students of all ages and backgrounds, noting the following challenges for students of color, students with disabilities, and students experiencing the destabilizing effects of new or persistent financial insecurity:

- Live in households where adults are more likely to experience job losses or Covid-19 exposure, creating or exaggerating economic constraints and negative health outcomes;
- Disparities in access to mental health services or the full range of academic and wrap around services that a school provides;
- Barriers in access to technology or necessary supports to stay connected to school and educational opportunities;
- Amplification of language barriers for students and households with English-language learners;

³ Elaine Bonner-Tompkins. Office of Legislative Oversight. MCPS Performance and Opportunity Gaps. Report Number 2019-4. December 2019. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/OLORReport2019-14.pdf>

⁴ *Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impact of Covid-19 on America's Students*. US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. June 2021. Available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf>

⁵ Elaine Bonner-Tompkins.

⁶ Elaine Bonner-Tompkins.

- Disrupted educational opportunities for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and;
- Overall, the report noted for all groups slow to non-existent recovery in academic achievement due to preexisting resource and opportunity gaps that produce disparate student performance outcomes.

Recent studies are beginning to quantify student learning losses during the pandemic. A recent study from Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) found that “in most grades, low-income students are substantially further behind than higher-income students. And in some grades, lower income students are falling behind while higher income students’ learning actually accelerated.”⁷ The study also noted that English Language Learners demonstrated substantially more learning lag than comparison students⁸. While this study is focused on the experiences of students in California, these disparities likely persist in other geographies though they may look different.

In addition to education disparities affecting K-12 students and disparate pandemic related health and economic impacts on households of color, there is mounting evidence about the toll the pandemic has taken on youth of color and other marginalized youth in terms of their mental health⁹ and increased risks of Covid-19¹⁰. Based on these disparities and inequities predating the pandemic, The Education Trust explains how evidence-based and rigorously implemented strategies like intensive tutoring and high-quality extended learning in summer programs can be especially valuable for students of color¹¹. PACE suggests prioritizing equity as a principle in the design of expanded learning opportunities to avoid replicating and embedding harmful policies and practices from local education system in the extended learning environment—an environment where students of color and other marginalized students should be prioritized in order to address disparities. The Executive Director of PACE warns that if educational disparities exaggerated by the pandemic are not addressed, it is likely that graduation rates will decline, and inequities in college access and success will increase¹².

⁷ Heath J. Hough. Brookings Institute. “COVID-19, the educational equity crisis, and the opportunity ahead”. April 29, 2021. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2021/04/29/covid-19-the-educational-equity-crisis-and-the-opportunity-ahead/>

⁸ Heather J. Hough.

⁹ Nirmita Pachal, Rabah Kamal, Cynthia Cox, Rachel Garfield, Priya Chidambaram. Kaiser Family Foundation. Mental Health and Substance Use Considerations Among Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic. May 2021. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/mental-health-and-substance-use-considerations-among-children-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

¹⁰ Samantha Artiga, Latoya Hill, Nambi Ndugga. Kaiser Family Foundation. “Racial Disparities in Covid-19 Impacts and Vaccinations for Children”. September 2021. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-in-covid-19-impacts-and-vaccinations-for-children/>

¹¹ The Education Trust. Recommendations for State Leaders to Advance Equity Using Funds from the American Rescue Plan. May 2021. Available at: <https://edtrust.org/resource/recommendations-for-state-leaders-to-advance-equity-using-funds-from-the-american-rescue-plan/>

¹² Heather J. Hough.

- III. **DATA ANALYSIS:** The racial equity impact assessments for Supplemental Appropriation #22-14 and #22-16 contain valuable analyses of youth mental health and Covid-19 case and death data by race and ethnicity. Those analyses were considered in the assessment of Supplemental Appropriation #22-15.

The table below reflects the demographic and service group characteristics of students enrolled in MCPS Summer 2021 programs compared to MCPS enrollment as of September 30, 2021. These data show that rates of Summer 2021 enrollment among students of color are comparable to their representation in Fall 2021 enrollment. The data also show disproportionately higher rates of Summer 2021 enrollment among students with IEPs, students who are English Language Learners, and students receiving Free and Reduced Meals. Overrepresentation of students in service groups and comparable representation of students of color in Summer 2021 enrollment is (as the preceding research explains) necessary so that educational gaps existing before and exaggerated by the pandemic can begin to be addressed.

Student race, ethnicity, and service group status	Summer 2021 Enrollment	MCPS Enrollment as of September 30 2021
Asian	19.56%	14.20%
Black/African American	25.96%	21.85
Hispanic/Latino	33.29%	32.80%
White	16.17%	25.80%
MU	4.70%	
Individual Education Plan (IEP)	21.63%	12.50%
English Language Learner (ELL)	22.71%	16.40%
Free and Reduced Meal System (FARMS)	42.27%	38.70%

Source: Data on Summer 2021 program enrollment accompanied this supplemental request. Data on MCPS enrollment as of September 2021 is from MCPS Data Dashboard. Learning Accountability and Results. "Enrollment: Individual Measures". Available at: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/data/LAR-charts/enrollment.html>

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive